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Rothenstein

Twenty-four

928 R84

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# TWENTY-FOUR PORTRAITS

by William Rothenstein

With critical appreciations by various hands



NEW YORK  
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

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TO THREE NOBLE MEN  
MAX BEERBOHM JOHN DRINKWATER AND WILLIAM SIMMONDS  
WHOSE ENCHANTING SOCIETY AND EQUALLY  
ENCHANTING WORKS WERE THE CROWNING COMFORT  
OF A LONG SOJOURN IN A COTSWOLD VILLAGE  
THESE TWENTY FOUR DRAWINGS ARE  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED





## Preface

The twenty-four drawings here reproduced by Mr. Emery Walker were selected from among many which it has been my happy privilege to make of my friends and contemporaries during the last few years. Two dozen are all too few where there are so many whose conduct and work contribute to our country's assets. The riches of the world do not all lie in mines or oil fields, nor yet in the safes of Banks, of Companies and of Trade Unions. Much of our wealth is supplied by men of vision who must often, lest they be prevented from giving their best, deposit their gold under men's pillows in the night-time.

The publication of these drawings is intended as an act of homage to those who give rather than take. If the result seems to warrant it I hope to continue the series. For the admirable text which accompanies the portraits I cannot be sufficiently grateful to my friends. I am proud to have had the co-operation of the wise and witty writers of the appreciatory notes; and my warm thanks—and the thanks of the readers—are due to H. Granville Barker, Max Beerbohm, Arnold Bennett, Laurence Binyon, A. Clutton-Brock, Francis M. Cornford, John Drinkwater, H.A.L. Fisher, A.H. Fox-Strangways, John Freeman, John Galsworthy, Eric Gill, Edmund Gosse, R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Sir Henry Hadow, David Hogarth, Sir Joseph Larmor, Frederick Manning, Henry W. Nevinson, Sir Henry Newbolt, James Stevens, George Street and H. G. Wells.

August 1920

W. R.



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GRANVILLE BARKER



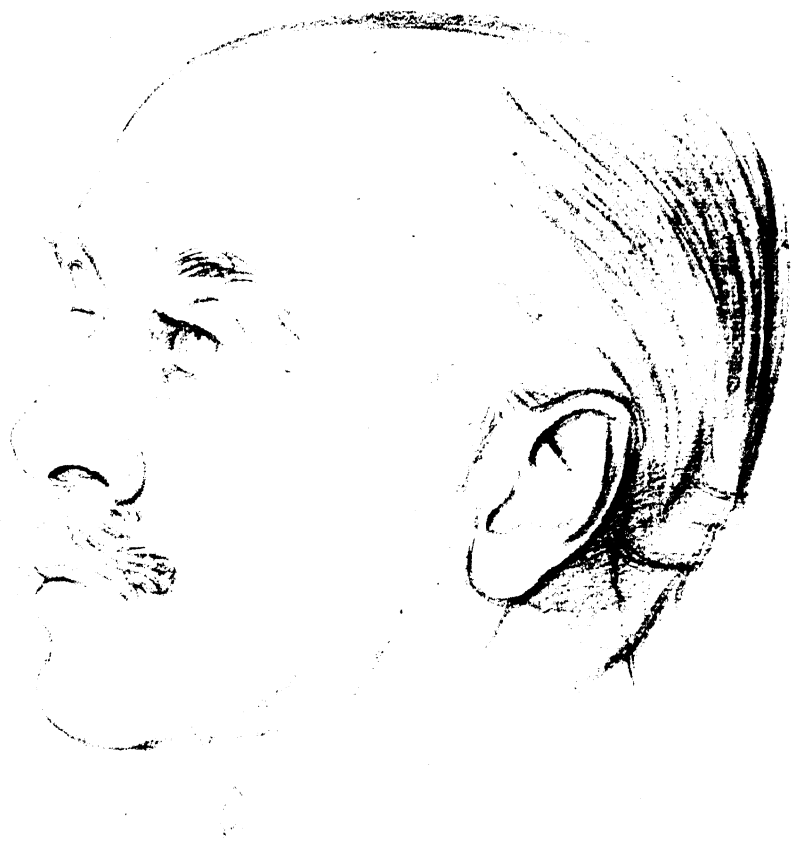






MAX BEERBOHM

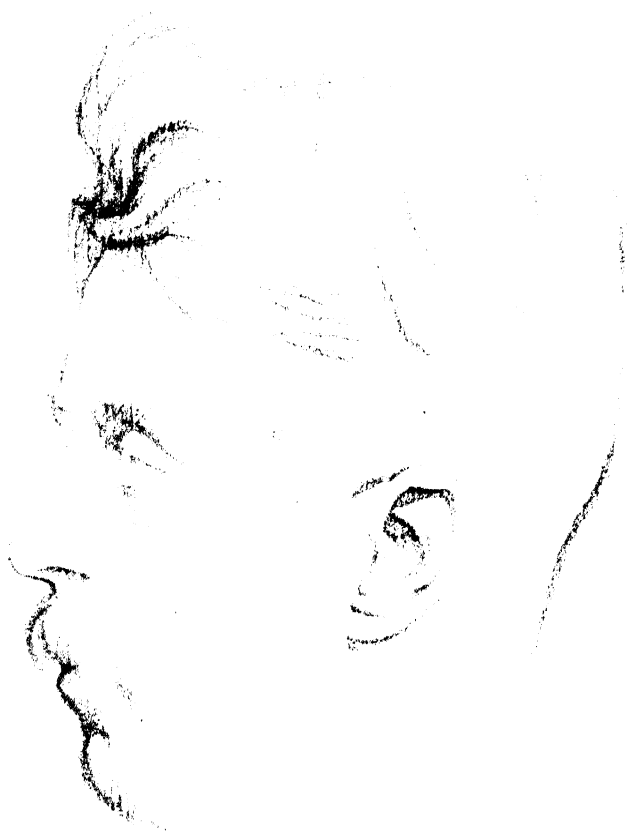






ARNOLD BENNETT

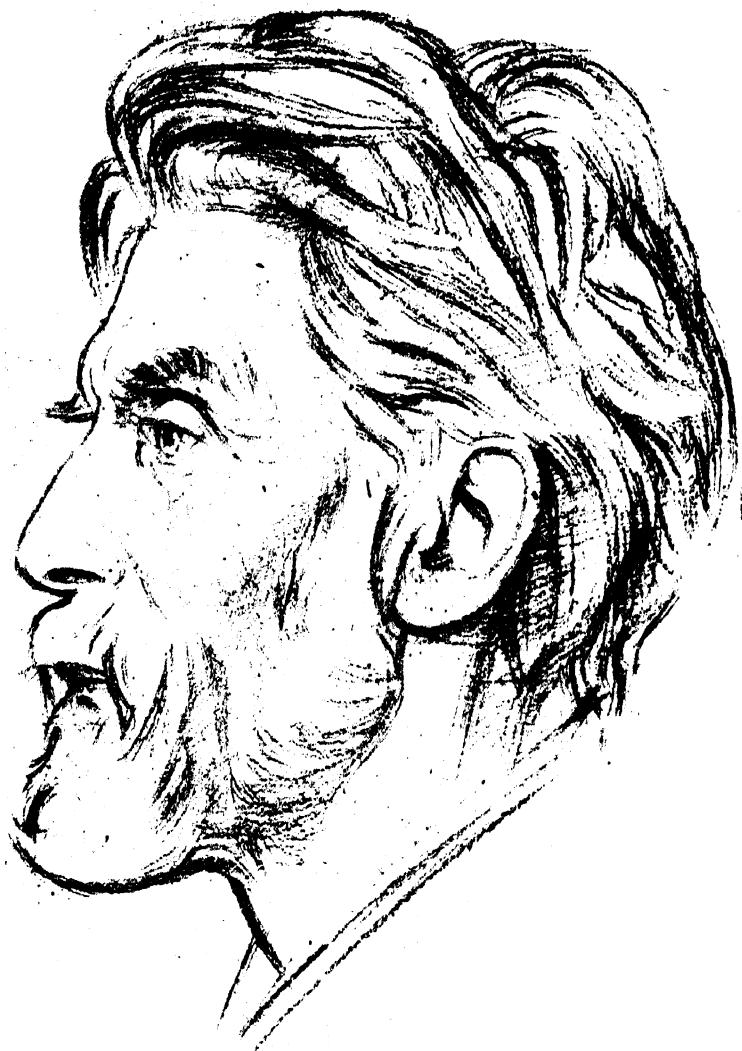


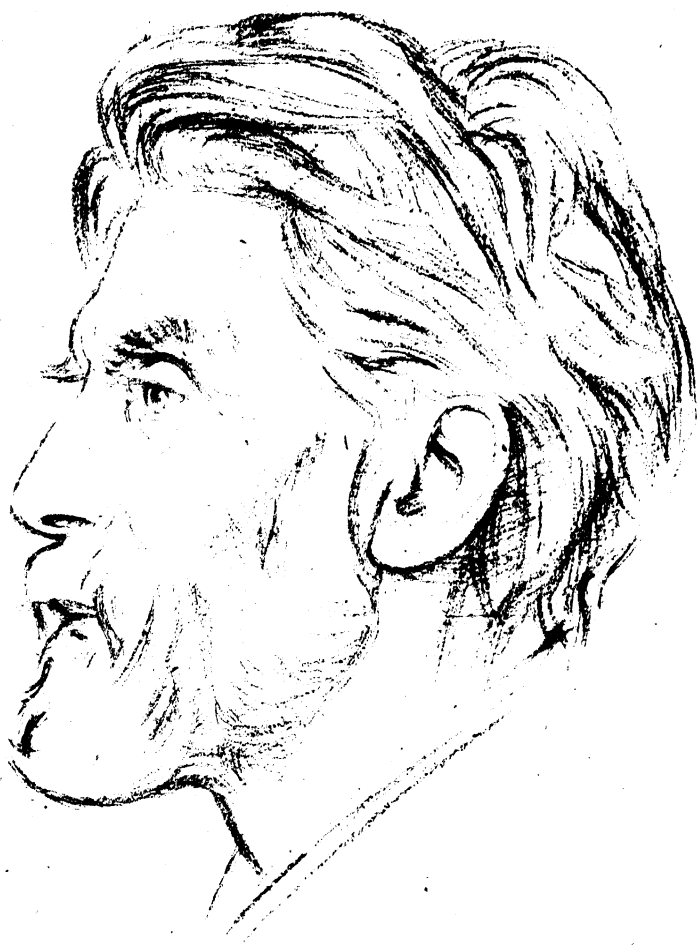






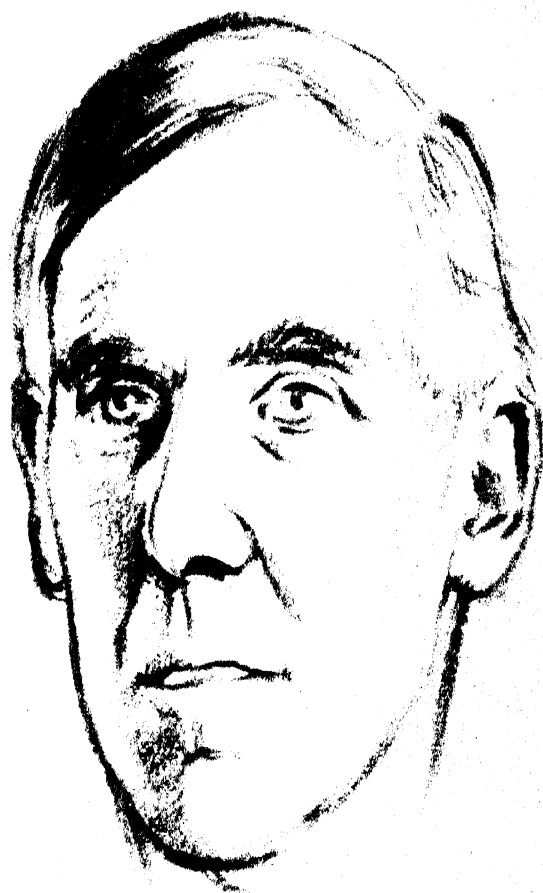
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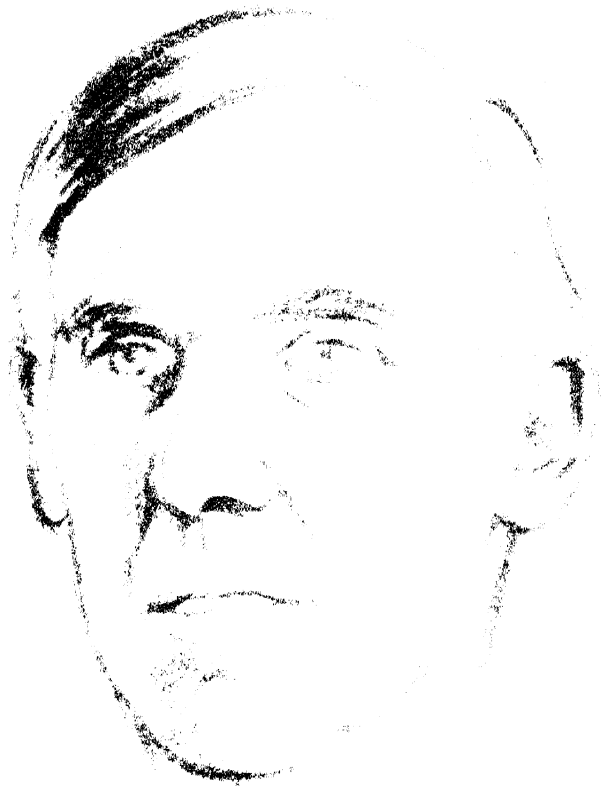






## A. CLUTTON-BROCK



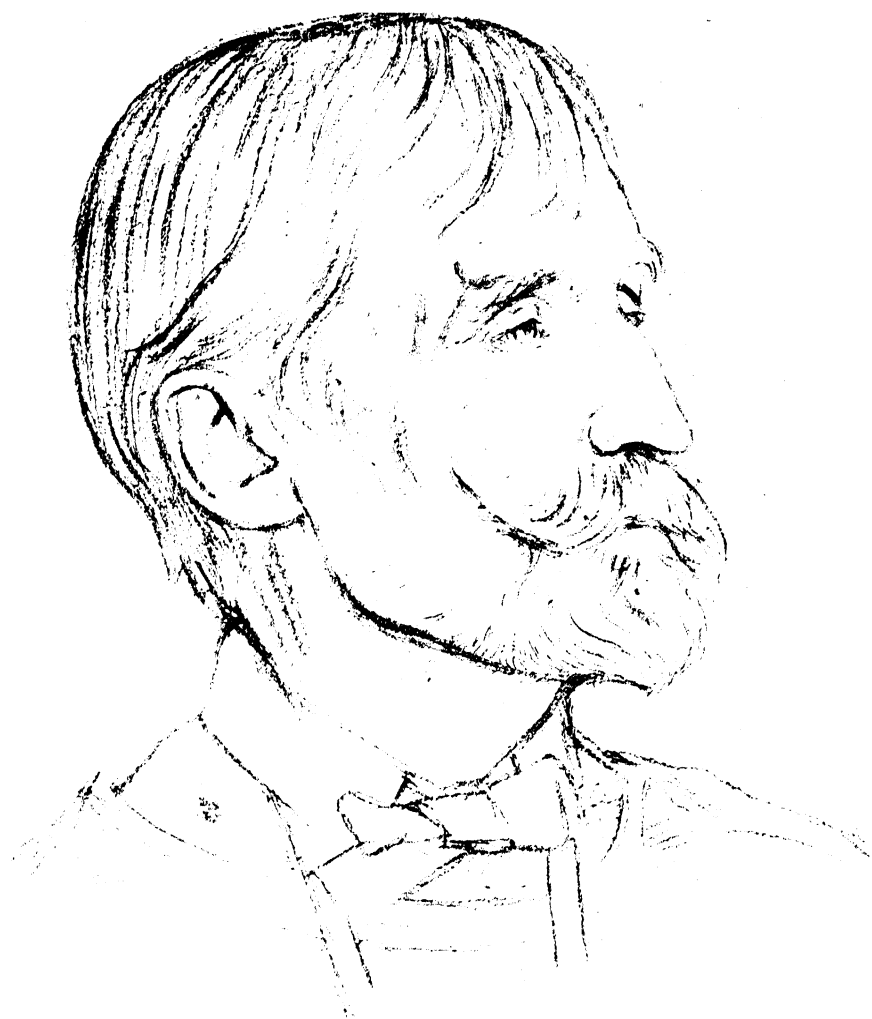






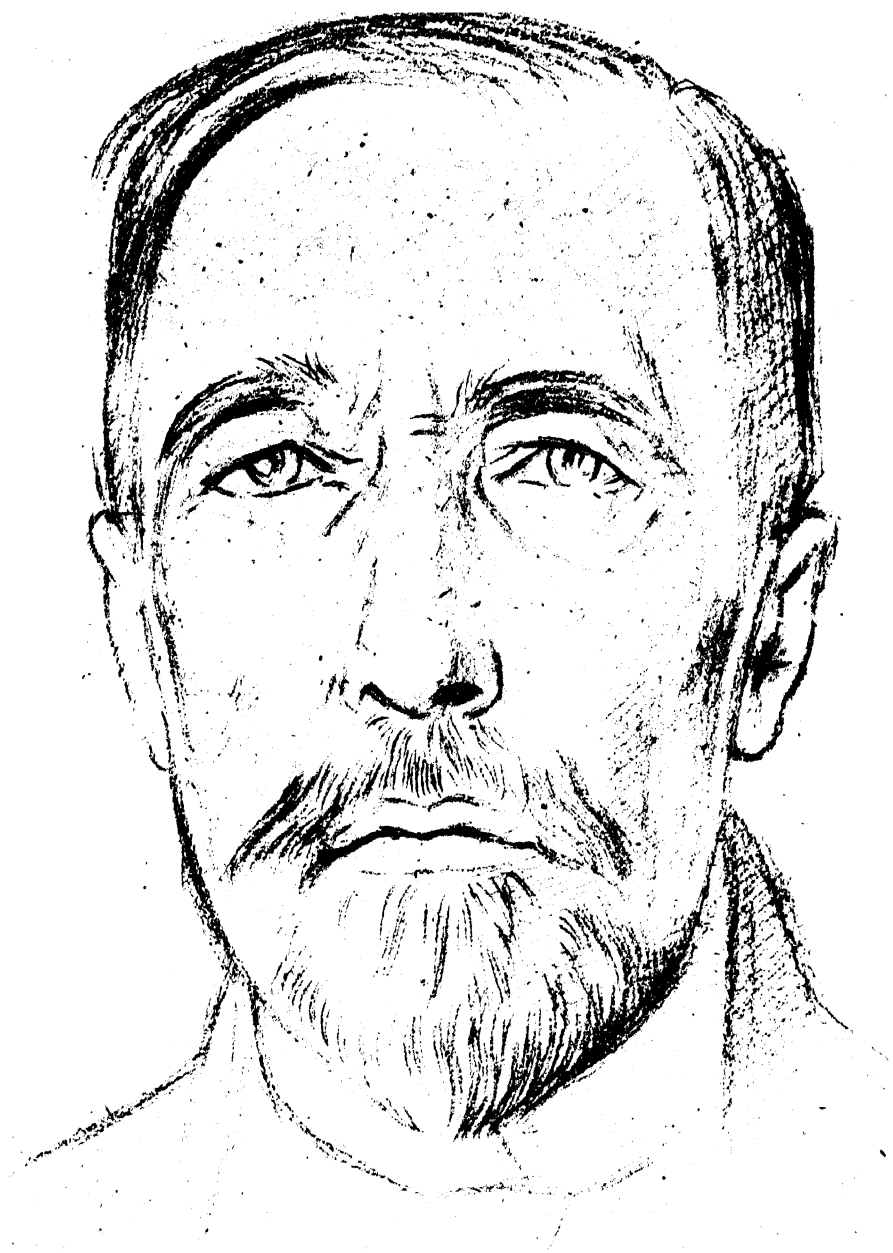
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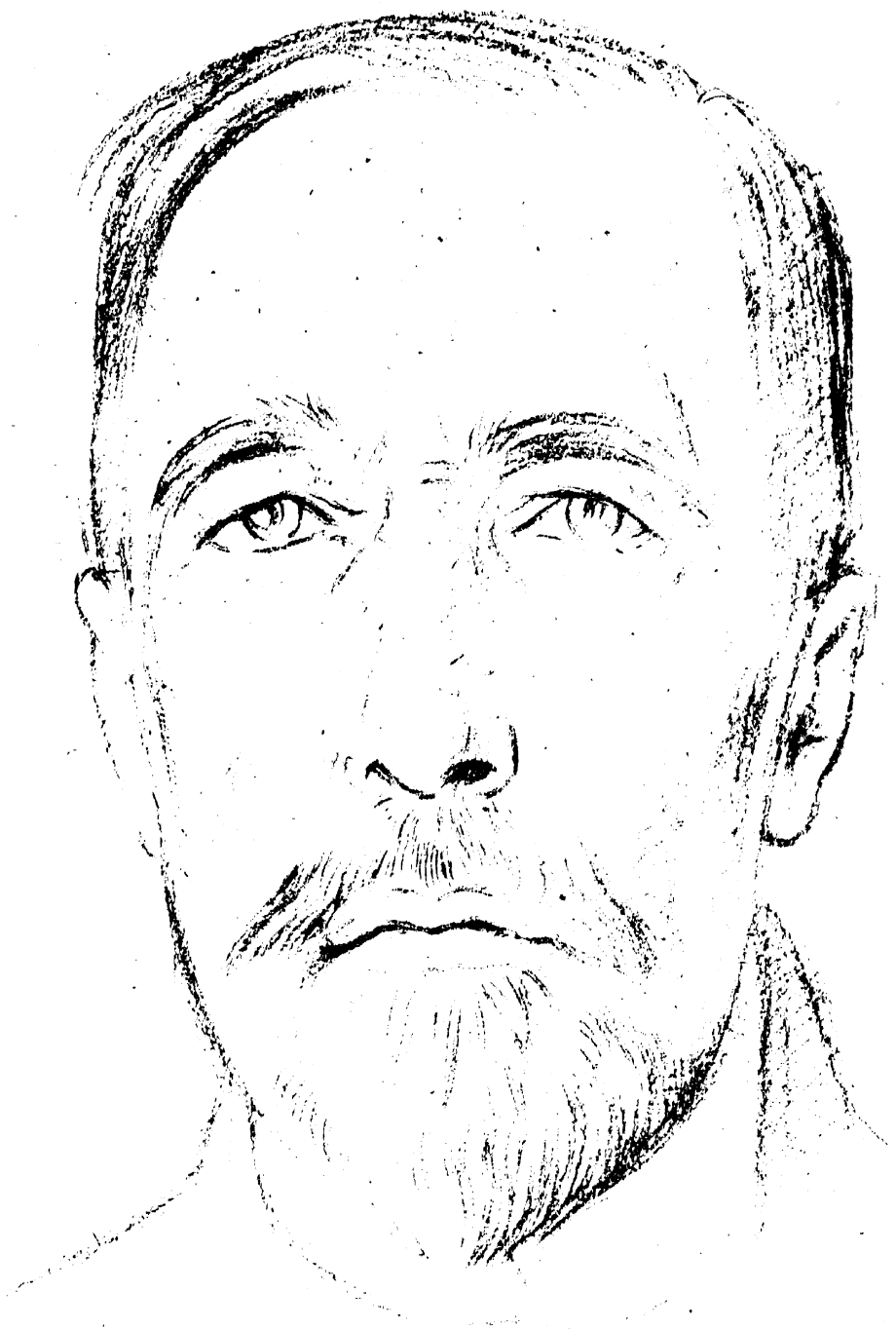






JOSEPH CONRAD









JOHN DRINKWATER



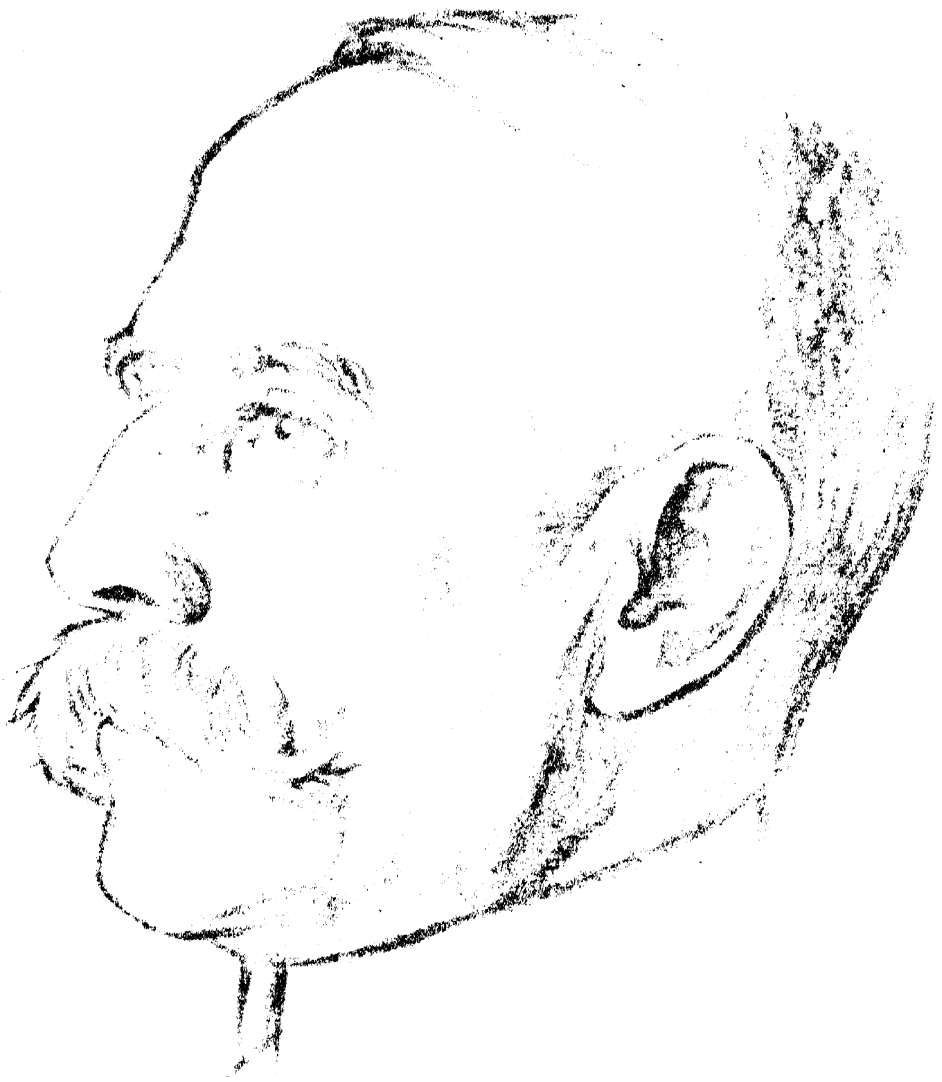




SIR EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.

## SIR EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.

The biography of every great artist is a history of the interaction between temperament and experience: between the natural endowment which is the content of genius and the training, whether of the schools or of the world, which gives it form and experience. In the career of Elgar this interaction has been singularly close and harmonious. His natural endowment is a keen sense of beauty of tone, an imagination vivid and poignant rather than wide of range, a special gift of pathos and tenderness, and above all a sheer intellectual power which might equally well have made him a great scientist, or a great man of letters. It is no coincidence, it is still less a pose, that he takes far more interest in discussing a chemical problem or extricating a seventeenth-century dramatist than in any question concerning this technique of his own art. 'I like music' he once said 'but I do not in the least care to know how it is made,' and he is probably to this day unconscious of the extent to which in his recent character music he has superseded the old classical form. Of direct musical training he had little or none. Schumann learned most of his counterpoint from Jean Paul: Elgar's composition owes less to the music teacher than to the collections of old English authors which he found in an attic at home and devoured through every spare moment of his boyhood. His astonishing gift of orchestration was trained not in any school but in amateur bands when he had the inestimable advantage of testing each experiment as he made it, and the result is a mastery of instrumental dialogue, which, had he nothing else, would give him rank among the great artists of the world. And he has much else. Of his limitations which are plain and obvious, there is no need here to speak—criticism has too often deserved its definition as the art of complaining about something because it is not something else—and Elgar has given so much that it would be ungrateful to discuss what he has withheld. A master of the grave and elegiac mood in music, a colourist whose richness of tone is reinforced by the full texture of his polyphony, he is above all conspicuous for the variety and interest of his musical structure. In the *Malvern Variations*, in the *Concert Overture*, in *Falstaff*, in the slow movement of the first symphony and the whole of the second; in the violin concerto, in the pianoforte quintet he has taken his place among the great composers and has written work which bids fair to live so long as the Art endures.



W. Rothengier  
1919

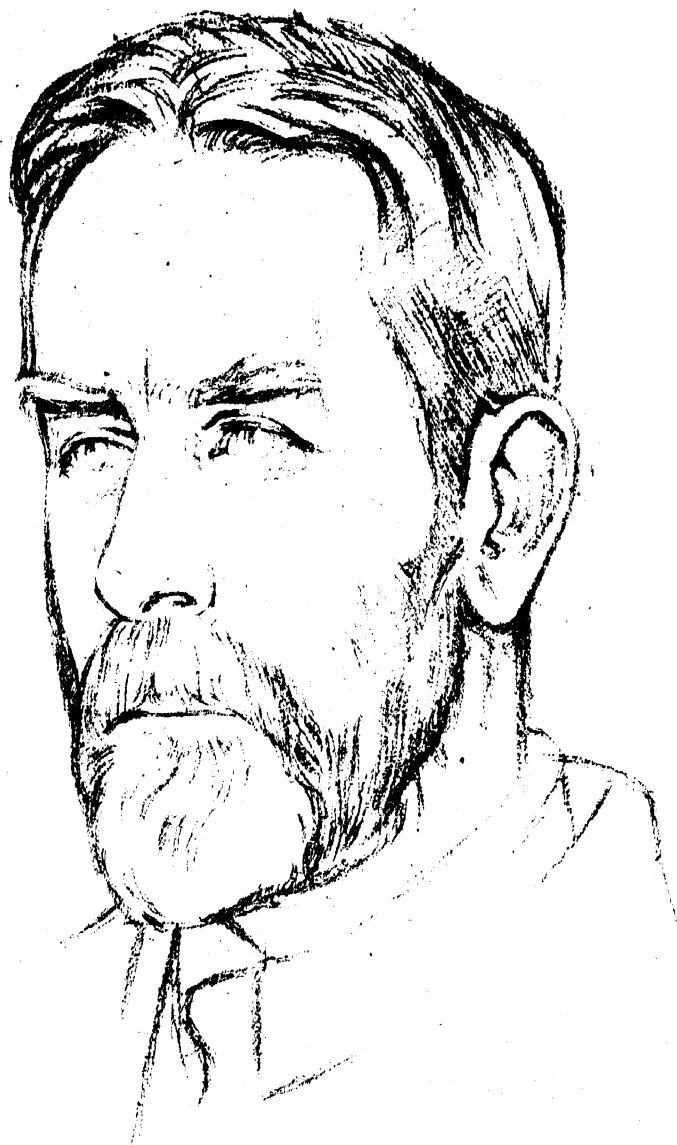




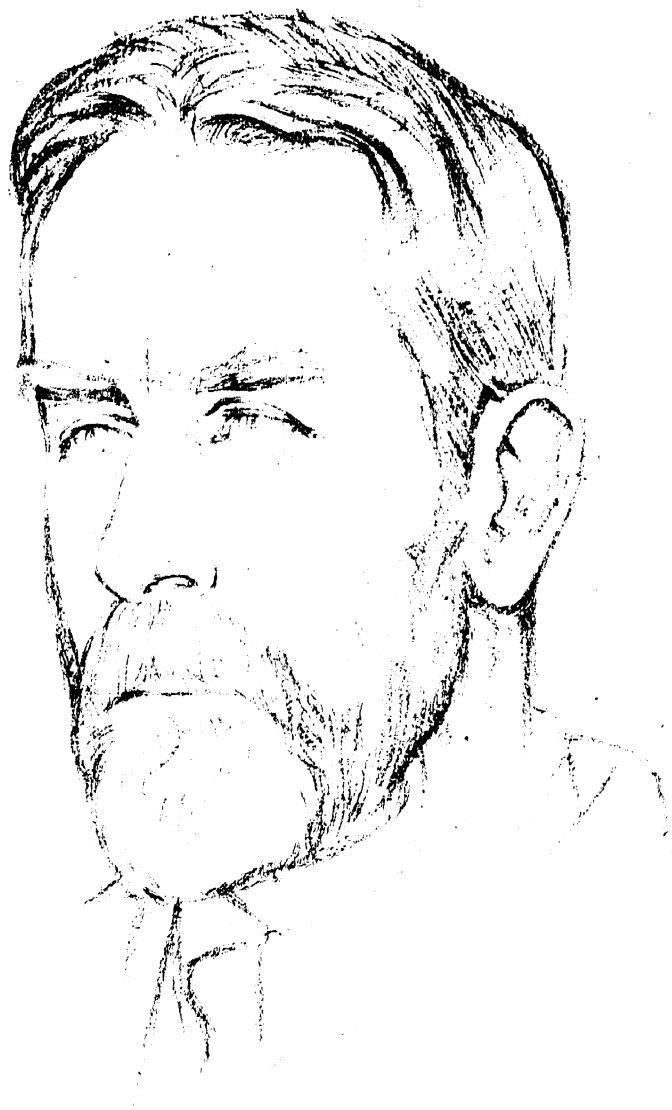
W. Rothengatter  
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SIR JAMES FRAZER



W.R. 1016



J. R. 1016



JOHN GALSWORTHY









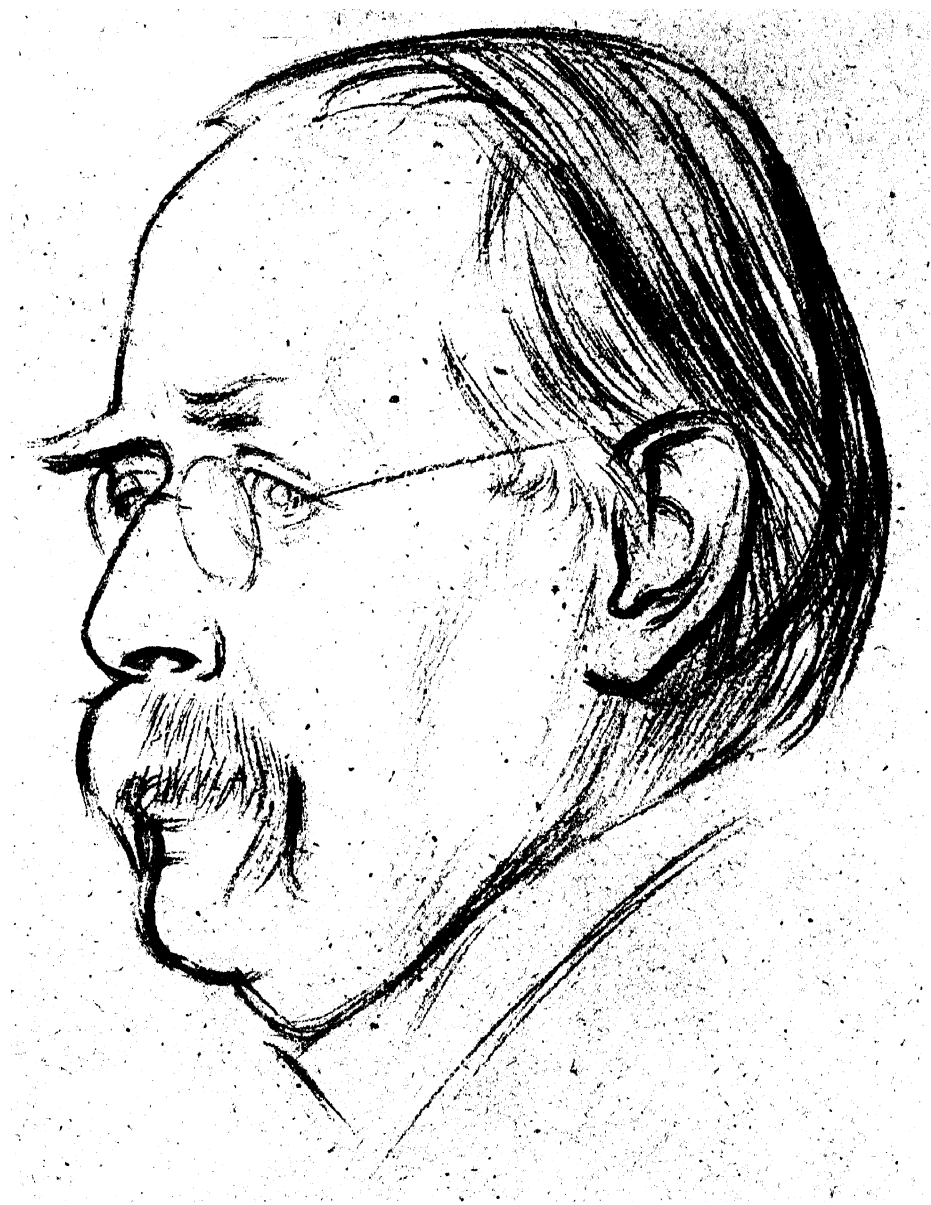
M. ANDRÉ GIDE



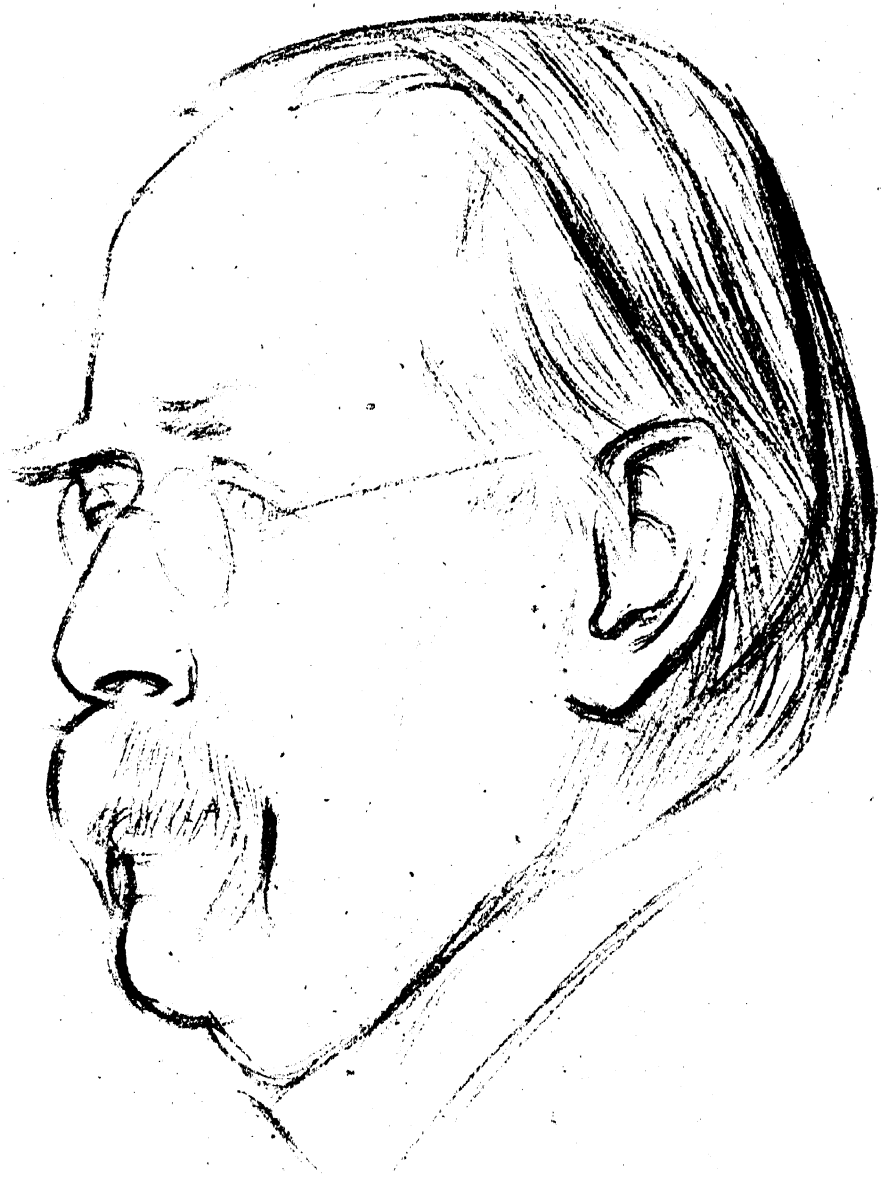




EDMUND GOSSE





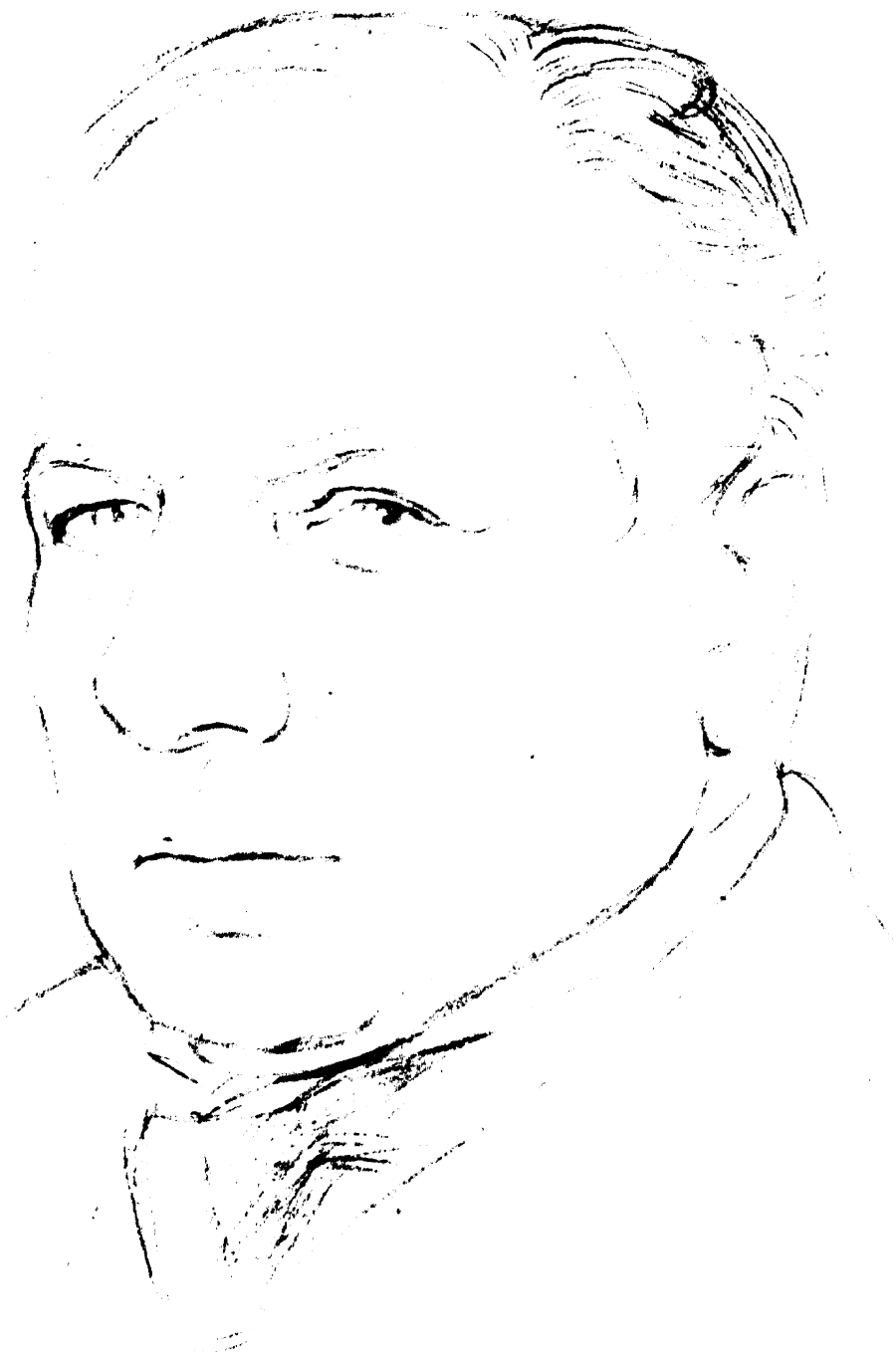




LORD HALDANE, O.M.

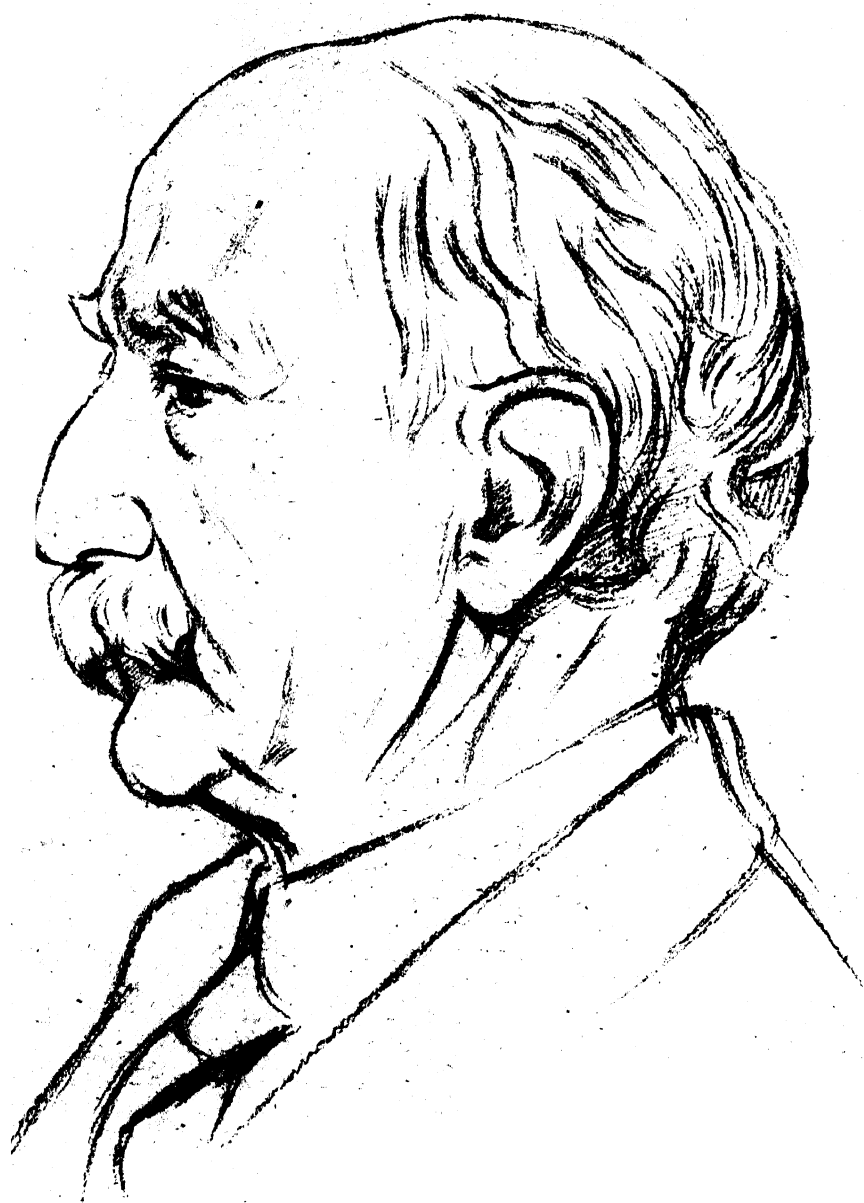


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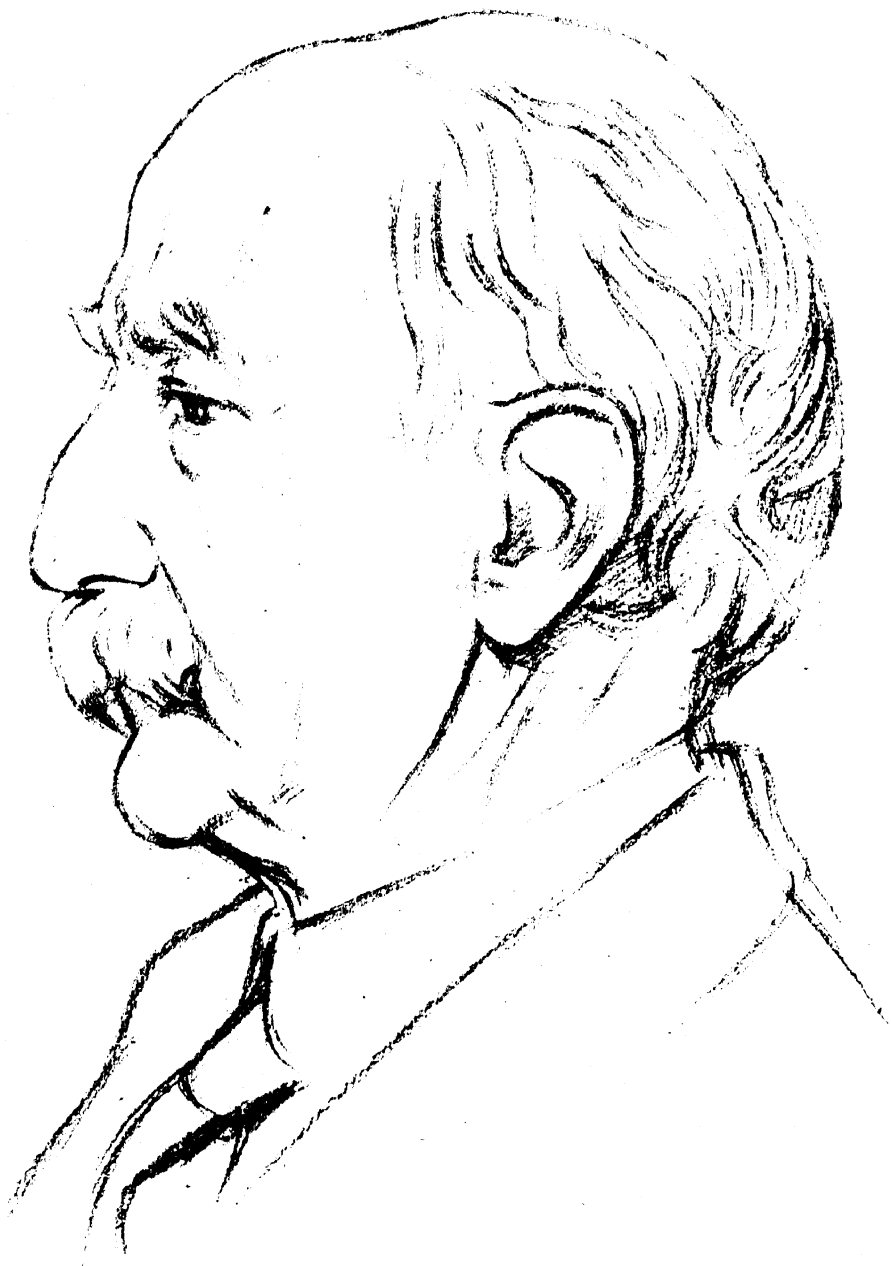




THOMAS HARDY, O.M.







W.R. 1916



A. E. HOUSMAN

## A. E. HOUSMAN

A. E. Housman is a poet in the English tradition. Calling his solitary book of lyrics *A Shropshire Lad*, he takes the reader back to a time when poetry was not merely or mainly metropolitan and each county knew creative pride. He uses the simplest English forms, writing new ballads that wear the grimness of the old; and he uses the simplest English themes, turning to days when the ploughman naturally loved a scarlet coat and, breaking the laws, was hanged for it without philosophically reviling the laws. His briefest verses have uncommon energy; they are a man's poetry and quicken the hearts of common men. It is a poetry which moves in the changeful waters of our time like a swimmer conscious of his strength and careless of all else. The best of the lyrics—few are below the best—have each this athletic power, a masculine curtness and full pride of life.

There is something else, something which only individual genius can impress upon the traditional forms and expand them with a more than mortal beauty. He looks at a man dying young:

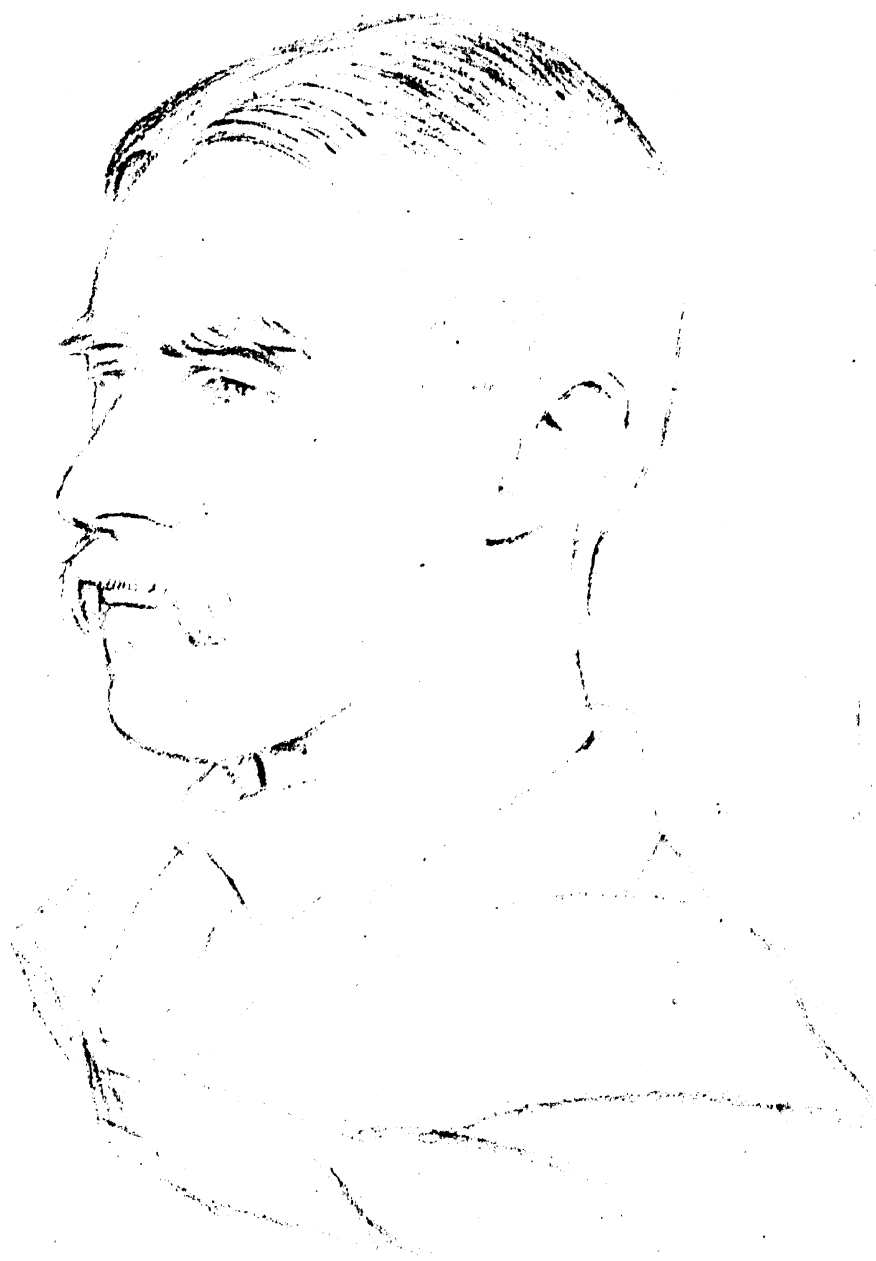
And round that early laurelled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,  
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's.

And here too he speaks with fresh ease in the classic manner of English lyrical poets:

Bring, in this timeless grave to throw,  
No cypress, sombre on the snow;  
Snap not from the bitter yew  
His leaves that live December through;  
Break no rosemary, bright with rime  
And sparkling to the cruel clime.

It is at once old and new, familiar and vivid.

That so small a book should present so sharp a figure in an atmosphere so clear, is the last tribute to A. E. Housman. The figure of *A Shropshire Lad* is one whose chief energy is action rather than thought; one for whom life holds change, passion, glory, shame; one who will easily avoid the gravest failure—failure to live intensely. Looking at the figure, as he emerges from these sixty-three lyrics and stands salient before you, the full proof of A. E. Housman's genius is seen in this, that he has created that figure neither larger nor smaller than life.







W. H. HUDSON



## W. H. HUDSON

How many epoch-making works have gone into the pulping vat, since "El Ombu" appeared.

There is no new way to pay old debts in spite of Massinger. From the beginning of the world good taste has governed all the arts.

The greatest artists have been eminently sane. The so-called artistic temperament did not seem to have existed for them. They all went about, carefully carrying on the ordinary business of life, paying their debts (when they were able) and bearing their life's burden patiently, knowing the end would set them free.

Genius digs the foundation of the edifice it rears, not knowing consciously that it is building for eternity, and works so unobtrusively that the passer-by seldom perceives a Parthenon is being built.

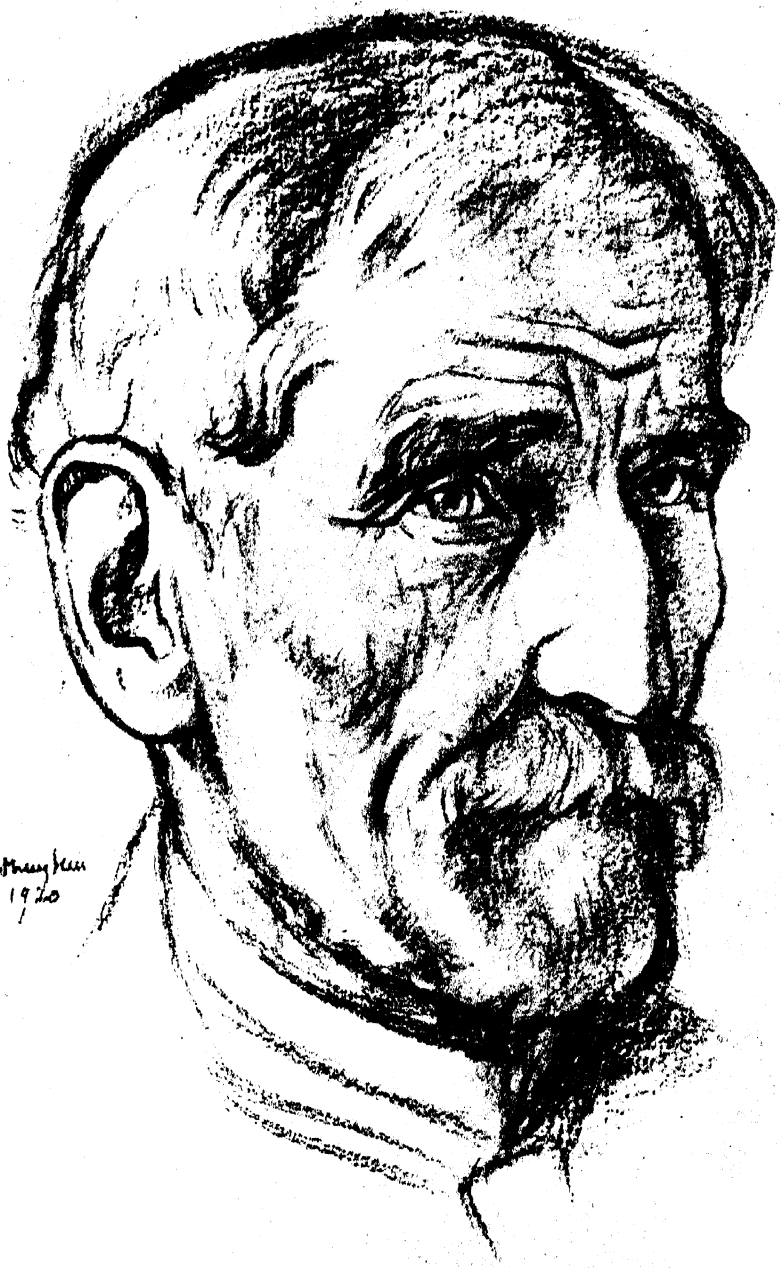
Hudson neither broke into the mystery of our yeasty sea, heralded with paragraphs, or blare of rattling tin-trumpets, nor was he, as was Paul of Tarsus, born free, but gained his freedom at great price, paying for it with neglect and poverty.

He has emerged at last and takes his place in the first rank of English writers. Perhaps he is a class alone, for who that writes to-day, has his strange, searching charm, his great simplicity, his love of animals; not as a man, being a god to them and knowing all things: but humble as themselves, humble because his genius shows him that in the scheme of nature one thing certifies the other, and the parts glorify the whole.

Versed, in his youth, more in the use of the "lazo" and the "boleadoras" than the pen, I think his love of nature set him on to write instinctively, just as a gaucho child, putting its little naked toe upon the horse's knee, climbs up and rides because he is compelled to ride or to remain a maimed and crippled animal, travelling the plains on foot.

So does a Magellanic owl, when once full-feathered, launch itself into the air and float off noiselessly.

W. Rothman  
1970





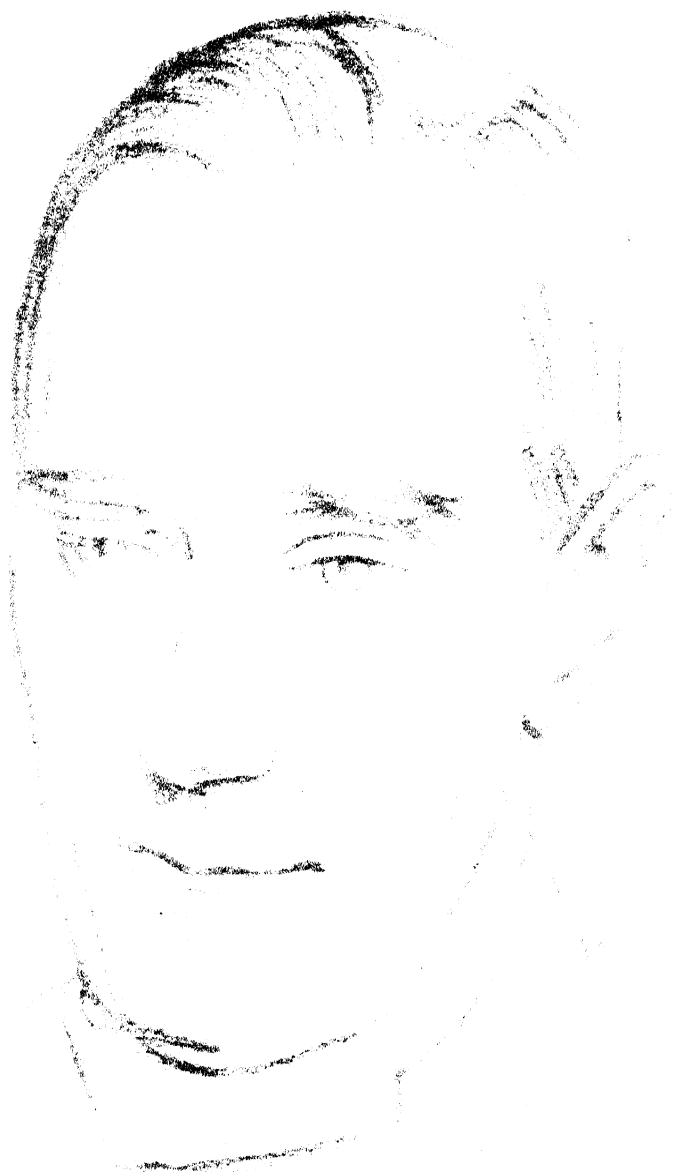
# THE DEAN OF SAINT PAUL'S

## THE DEAN OF SAINT PAUL'S

It is not rare that a man hostile to the spirit of his age, a Swift or a Voltaire, should reflect it perfectly. Current sophistries and superstitions are perpetuated in controversy. Protagoras lives for us in Plato, and Jurieu's doctrine of irresponsible democracy in Bossuet's reply. Perhaps some feminine characteristic is latent in all democracies, that being persecuted they endure, and bless those that curse them: the delicate sensibility of women found a subtle flattery in the monkish phrase, *instrumentum diaboli*; reaching to a like stimulus our own age accepts Dean Inge as not least among its prophets.

The face shows a gravity almost sombre, the eyes an inflexible watchfulness, the mouth a theological severity, and these are qualities of his style. So admirable a piece of work as his *Plotinus*, could have been written only by one, for whom mysticism had an almost irresistible fascination: but the mind is divided; it is too preoccupied by politics, ethics, science, even by theological dogmas and discipline; it is too reasonable, perhaps, ever to attain to the beatific vision, in which opposites are reconciled, and things incompatible admitted equally. It is too partial; for the mystic, like the agnostic, ends in complete negation, when all sense, mind, and desire, and even the denial of them are extinguished in the eternal silence which is God.

In external questions, truth is negligible, since it is imposed on us. Outside the ideal world of our own creating, there is only a blind action of natural forces, which the mind of man will always disregard. The future is not determined by reason; but reason and those obscure reactions to circumstances, which we call instincts, are molten together, precipitated into the incoherent effects of action, by a sudden passion of the will. Progress is change, a dispersion of forces and values without object: science only extends the field of human error. Though recognizing that reason has denied a material, as it had denied previously a spiritual progress, humanity obeys its instincts: it is this complex and illogical process that Dean Inge reflects so clearly; but of which he is also, in some sense, the child.



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W. R. 1920





THOMAS EDWARD LAWRENCE

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He is not so young as he looks and he is hardly anything that he is popularly supposed to be — not Daredevil for example, nor Knight-errant nor Visionary nor Romantick. The things he wants not to be are quite numerous; but things he could be, if he wanted, are more numerous still. He is not fond of being anything, and official categories do not fit him. He can do most things and does some; but to expect him to do a particular thing is rash. Besides being anti-official, he dislikes fighting and Arab clothes, Arab ways, and social functions, civilized or uncivilized. He takes a good deal of trouble about all things but quite a great deal about repelling the people whom he attracts, including all sorts and conditions of men and some sorts and conditions of women; but he is beginning to be discouraged by consistent failure, which now and then he does not regret. He has as much interest as faith in himself: but those who share the last are not asked to share the first. He makes fun of others or kings of them, but if anyone tries to make either one or the other of him he runs away. Pushing (not himself) he finds more congenial than leading and he loves to push the unsuspecting body: but if it does not get on as fast as he thinks it should, he pushes it into the gutter and steps to the front. What he thinks is his Law. To think as fast or as far as he thinks is not easy, and still less easy is it to follow up with such swift action. He can be as persuasive as positive; and the tale of those he has hocused into doing something they never meant to do and are not aware that they are doing, is long. It is better to be his partner than his opponent, for when he is not bluffing, he has a way of holding the aces: and he can be ruthless, caring little what eggs he breaks to make his omelettes and ignoring responsibility either for the shells or for the digestion of the mess. Altogether a force felt by many but not yet fully gauged either by others or by himself. He should go far; but it may be in driving lonely furrows where at present few expect him to plough.





JOHN MASEFIELD

## JOHN MASEFIELD

Masefield, the poet—as it concerns the public to know him—was probably born in the first years of the seventeenth-century. He was country and not town bred, that seems certain. For some part of his youth he was probably at sea; we may judge this by the ease with which he writes of all seafaring things; otherwise the episode is only important in his career if it burned deeper into his consciousness his close inheritance from Elizabethan England, its passionate ambition for adventure into new worlds of fact and thought, its suddenly developed sense of national worth and honour. We note his reverence for learning, too, see him next, if chance allowed, drawn towards Oxford. And if so he surely found himself in Falkland's circle, following their trend from poetry to philosophy, much at ease in that short golden age of English culture. From such a happy time and circumstance we might well be dating his maturer work as we now know it; gentle, high of thought, classic in outline, traditionalist, but not constrained, tolerant, stoical in obligation, Christian in consideration; the work of a patrician mind. But that was not to be. Political catastrophe shattered the England of those dreams. And only now, within this decade or so, does it seem that we at last may be resolving the issue of the Puritan challenge; its spiritual bravery absorbed and ourselves purged of its dross, its flocks-and-herds Old Testament materialism.

But Masefield comes to his inheritance now and already he has enlarged it for yet younger men; witness their regard for him, safe token that he is of the legitimate line. For he is so infinitely English; genuinely, unselfconsciously so. Therefore, he writes poetry as naturally as he speaks, writing of common English things, his poet's task to make us feel that England in every blade of grass, in every brain, in every stroke of hand can be, if so she will be, worthily alive.







GEORGE RUSSELL (A. E.)

## GEORGE RUSSELL (A. E.)

When we mention names such as Milton or Velasquez or Beethoven we speak of people in whom there is instantly recognized one peculiar and fundamental excellence, and the task of appraising them is facilitated by being limited. Of certain others, such as Shakespeare or da Vinci or Michael Angelo, this is not true— Their energies overflow any possible vessel, and under whatever examination they remain as unknown as beings from another sphere. This enormous and baffling energy is also to be found in Mr. George Russell (A.E.), so that while he is known to some as a painter of delightful pictures others recognize him mainly as a poet, while many, again, think of him as an expert on economics, as a distinguished social theorist, as a mystic philosopher, as a terrific controversialist, or even as a brilliant and tireless conversationalist. This energy is the very hall-mark of genius, and whether the world wins or loses by a dispersal rather than a concentration of energy is a matter for speculation. "The world" is a large matter and one may not speak with much assurance about it. If A. E. had not written poems would he have been a better painter? If he had foregone painting and poetry would he now be the greatest writer of English prose living? These are questions full of intellectual interest, but in the long run they do not matter in the least, for if the person spoken of is free from worldly ambition he is not affected in any way. The work of an artist is only incidentally cultural, he is one who liberates himself for himself and explains himself to himself. It is as a poet that the writer personally conceives A.E., and, with the sole exception of Mr. Yeats, there is no person living worthy of being measured against him. But in this art he requires imaginative reading, and he may, for a long time yet, be invisible to the average book-buyer.



W.R. Dublin Nov. 1914



G. BERNARD SHAW

## MR. G. BERNARD SHAW

Mr. Shaw, like most great writers when they become familiar, is now taken for granted; people, especially the young, enjoy his writing without giving him credit for their enjoyment. He has ceased to surprise and would do so only if he wrote badly; but posterity, after he has been forgotten for a while, will discover that he is one of the great masters of comedy. People complain now that he is not like the other Great Masters; but they are not like each other. Each of them has written a new kind of comedy; and so has Mr. Shaw. Each of them, probably has been called cruel, but there is an almost morbid humanity in all of them which they try to conceal by one device or another. Mr. Shaw is as bad at concealing it as any of them and grows worse as he gets older. It becomes more and more plain that he is a Don Quixote who has never gone mad, an Irish Gentleman of the old school who loves good stories and simple people, even when English, and for whom chivalry is the most necessary of all virtues.

Mr. Shaw has almost made a parade of the modernity of his tastes; but I doubt whether he really likes even Ibsen. He has supported Ibsen out of chivalry, but his secret idol is Shakespeare and still more Mozart. Indeed he might say with a slight alteration of Prior's Ode:-

The Merchant, to secure his treasure,  
Conveys it in a borrowed name:  
Wagner may serve to grace my measure,  
But Mozart is my real flame.

Mozart, and everything he means, is what Mr. Shaw enjoys; and he remains, perhaps, a little puzzled by his own tastes in art and in human beings. After all, he sees, the Christian virtues are what he really likes and the artists whom no one doubts, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Mozart. Mankind are not so far wrong, at least in their worship, as he once believed; and he himself likes mankind better than he thought. So posterity will like him better than he expects; and few of our writers are so sure of being read by it.







SIR J. J. THOMSON, O.M.

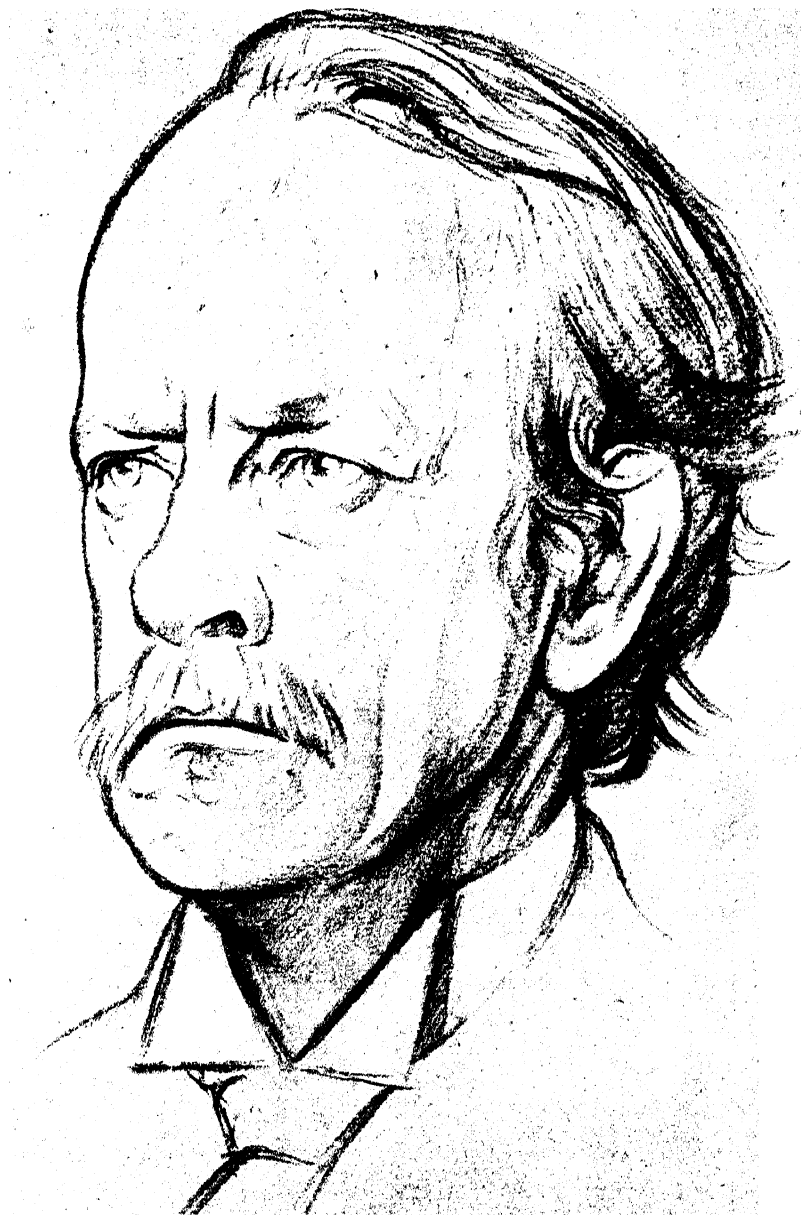
## SIR J. J. THOMSON, O.M.

The University of Cambridge takes rank in the fore-front of the intellectual centres of the English-speaking race, and it is expected that the Master of Trinity shall be among her most representative men. What sort of man then is it whose recent nomination by the Crown to that high office has been received with such universal acclaim?

The great reputation of Sir Joseph John Thomson was not acquired in the domain of public affairs. His life-work has rather been in the most retired fields of effort purely intellectual, whose harvest yet can lead to more enduring fame than the most brilliant service of a place-man to the transient age for which he works.

He was destined to open up for the Cavendish Laboratory new fields of renown. By unsparing work and thought the experience and apparatus requisite for novel and ambitious experimental designs were in the course of years built up. The culmination came twenty-three years ago when he was able to announce the deviation, and scrutiny in detail, of the primordial moving objects, minute beyond previous conception, which are functioning all around us as the ultimate foundation of light and electricity, even perhaps of matter itself. The band of enthusiasts who were then engaged with him in translating into firm experimental fact the relations of their electrons, which had previously existed only in shadowy form in theory, could hardly have imagined that in twenty years those elusive particles, moving at speeds almost incredible, would have become so amenable to control by gradually improved technique as to form a sure foundation for signalling across space, and even for the direct transmission of speech and music over thousands of miles,—or that the rights of use of the simple appliances evolved for these applications would have become the subject of international legal controversy involving vast monetary interests.

An investigator who is conspicuous in bringing about such results does not lack full international appreciation: it is appropriate that at home he should be President of the Royal Society, while his possession of the Order of Merit even adds to the international prestige of that select distinction.





H. G. WELLS

## H. G. WELLS

There are two passages in Henry James's letters which express pretty accurately, our view of Mr. Wells's place among other writers of our time, and give a description, true and illuminating, of the essential nature of his mind and genius. They come in letters addressed to Mr. Wells himself, and the first is this: "And nothing matters after the fact that you are to me so much the most interesting representational and ironic genius and faculty, of our Anglo-Saxon world and life, in these bemuddled days, that you stand out intensely vivid and alone, making nobody else signify at all." The other passage is as follows: "Your big feeling for life, your capacity for chewing up the thickness of the world in such enormous mouthfuls, while you fairly slobber, so to speak, with the multitudinous taste . . . ." We might almost leave Mr. Wells at that, but it is pleasant to attempt some little elaboration.

Many a little mind has run hither and thither, poking itself into this and that and shrilling its comments. It is when one considers the quality of Mr. Wells's that the variousness and aboundingness of its achievement are so amazing, stupefying. It is above all a greedy mind, insatiable of life and thought, but this immense avidity never betrays its clearness and subtlety of vision. There are the early quasi-scientific wonder tales, which might well be called a sort of Arabian Nights of our age; there are the earlier psychological novels, and the novels in which life is just "chewed up" as Henry James says, for its own sake; there are the later sociological novels which expound a thesis, or envisage a large set of circumstances, and such a feat of reconstruction as "Mr. Britling"; there are the direct sociological tracts like his *Utopia*, and a multitude of direct essays on the affairs and tendencies of mankind, and there is the *History of the World*, of which it is enough now, perhaps, if one asks what other living writer could have the courage to attempt such a task and the capacity to see it through.

It would be absurd to suppose that all this variety of achievement could please everybody all the time. There is no room in this place for criticism, and scarcely for preferences. We would say, however, that after all acknowledgment has been made to Mr. Wells's philosophy and sociology, his acute eye for tendencies and his zeal for a justly ordered world, and after all appreciation of the fire and tenderness in his probing of human passions, what is of the greatest and most lasting value in his work is its record, vivid, forceful, lit up by ironic humour but searchingly true, of the English life of his time.







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